2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

LANGUAGE

Seri speech on first audition seems fairly difficult for the European ear. This is on account of the presence of marked tone instead of stress accent; an abundance of "gutturals," that is, palatal and velar stops and fricatives and glottal stops; a surd l and surd bilabial f; and certain consonant clusters. None of these features, however, present serious difficulties to a phonetically trained ear, and it is expectable that when intensive study can be made, it will show the Seri language a distinct one indeed, but in no sense abnormal. The tone variations are great enough to be unusually plain, and syllables are spoken in an even, measured way with clear articulation.

The principal present interest of the vocabulary I recorded is in the light it may throw on the ethnic relations and origin of the Seri. The vocabulary puts beyond doubt the often accepted kinship of the Seri to the Yuman languages.[11] However, the differences are also great. I had expected that an accurately recorded vocabulary might class Seri outright as one of the Yuman group of languages. This expectation however has been dispelled. Seri is coördinate with the Yuman group as a whole, not a branch of it.

Another possibility remains to be considered. The Yuman family may be described as situate at the head of the Gulf of California, extending east, north, and west of the mouth of the Colorado in a fairly compact block. The most remote member of the family geographically, as well as the most diverse intrinsically, it appears, is Cochimí, which occupied Lower California between about latitudes 26° and 31°,[12] in other words, the central part of the peninsula, across the Gulf from the Seri. Now if Seri is an ancient off-shoot from the main stem of the Yuman languages at the head of the Gulf, then Cochimí, which is also a much diversified off-shoot from the same stem, but on the other side of the Gulf, ought to represent a separate specialization independent of Seri, and the ancientness of split-off combined with the territorial separation ought to have led to an increased divergence of the two off-shoots from the presumedly ancestral and still relatively homogeneous main Yuman block. That is, in this event the relationship of Seri to Cochimí being through the main Yuman group, Seri and Cochimí should be more different from each other than either from Yuman. The line of similarity and kinship thus would be Seri-main Yuman-Cochimí.

[11] A. S. Gatschet, Der Yuma-Sprachstamm, 1883 (Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, 9:24, 1877-1882); D. G. Brinton, The American Race, 1891, 1901; J. W. Powell, BAE-R, 7:138, 1891; Kroeber, UC-PAAE, 11:379-396, 1916. McGee, 296-298, on the basis of Hewitt's comparative analysis, 299-344, makes Seri unrelated.

[12] Kiliwi or Kilwa and Akwa'ala-Paipai in the northern end of the peninsula belong with Diegueño, Cocopa, Walapai, etc., that is are "normal" Yuman and not Cochimí-Yuman in type.

439 little gods I traded some muslin, a harmonica and some *panoche*. For
123 native hair brushes, I traded three fine-tooth combs for catching *piojos*, or lice, easier. I gave each woman a little round mirror and they were greatly pleased.

To the old Chief I presented a good pocket knife and a mirror. For the bow I traded a spark lighter. By striking the edge of a small wheel with milled edge it strikes a spark from a small flint and lights a wick.

123 We asked for a dance, and the Seris, using the bow and striking
535 sticks for music, the slender girl jumped up and down on a flat piece
[534] of tin which served, instead, of a turtle shell and also served for
[252] baking flour cakes upon also. A while before, Louis had seen a woman
[415] wash her head and that of a child in the chamber pot, empty the water and then cook in it.

After the girl had danced a while on the tin, old Manual Encina pushed her away and hopped on himself and did the double-shuffle for half an hour, after which we left for our camp.

197 The language of the Seris is the most difficult and peculiar I
194 have ever heard. It is spoken deep in the throat with the mouth open and sounds like no other language I have ever heard except that there are some sounds like Papago.

439 Even before breakfast of the next day we were still trading with
123 the Indians, and in an hour or so I possessed nearly everything they had except their rags. They seemed happy and contented and postponed their trip to Hermosillo. I left some stuff with Louis Thomson to be traded later for bows and arrows, Pelican skin dresses and baby cradles.

We then arranged our loads, said *Adios* to the Seris, and left for Hermosillo, where we arrived without accident about six-thirty p.m. The sun was very hot and the road heavy and the sun glaring, and we were all very tired when we reached town. I stored my stuff with Mr. Marks at Hotel Cohen, and will crate it before leaving for Yaqui River.

123 Before leaving the Seri Chief I told him that whenever he saw
202 this sign---Circle Bar D and left hand below it, it was me---their friend, and not to shoot at me. He said he would tell all the Seris, and I left him my card with the same sign on it. When will I see him again!

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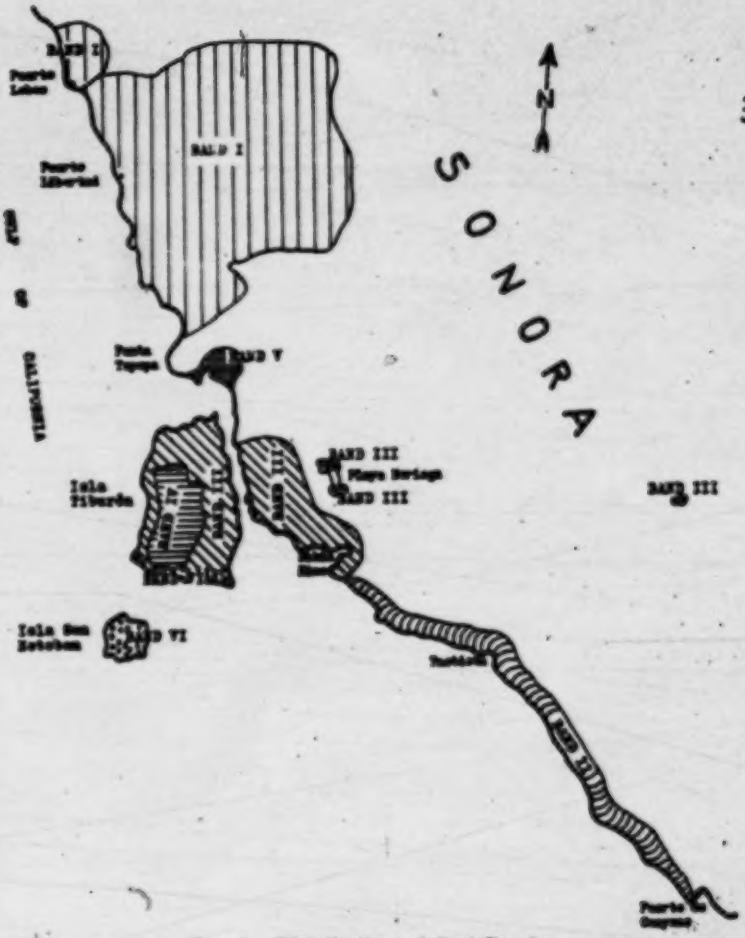

FIG. 2. Distribution of Seri Bands

DIALECTS

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The existence in former times of three distinct but mutually intelligible dialects seems evident.

Dialect 1 was spoken by Bands I, II, III, and IV. Any diversity of speech among these four bands seems to have been confined to word formation. The Seri language of today is derived largely from this dialect. [192]

Dialect 2 was spoken by Band V. This dialect is extinct and only scanty data on it can be gathered. From a number of expressions gathered, it appears that the dialect was characterized by extreme intonational contours. [194]

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[194]
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Dialect 3 was spoken by Band VI. This dialect, which is also extinct, is described by the informants as musical and is referred to as "singing talk." Expressions which are recalled are characterized by sharp pitch contours and heavy stress. Several grammatical constructions from this dialect have been found to contain morphemes unknown to present-day speakers.

The elicitable utterances and expressions of dialects 2 and 3 appear to employ the same segmental phonemes as present-day Seri.

BAND SUBDIVISIONS

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Three of the six bands were subdivided. The territorial subdivisions of those three, Bands I, III, and VI are shown on Figs. 3-5.

BAND I

Band I became divided into six groups, each group occupying a subdivision of the band territory. Each such subdivision was called an *i?iziiting*. The name of the most prominent camp in each *i?iziiting* was generally used also as the name of that subdivision. The names of these subdivisions are;[4]

zaah ?akaila	"(arrows) shot at the cliff"
pailk ?aokwt	"driftwood huts"
xpano ?ax	"fresh water in the sea"
?aasixp	"white mesquite"
?axwii?om	"place of clams"
xapoya?	"sea lion . . ."

BAND III

This band became subdivided into fifteen groups, named as follows;

?ah?ax	"whichever water"
kiazin	"long and narrow"
sakpatix	"_____"
?aank	"clam (species of)"
?atkisa	"rotten testicle"
taih it	"willow trunk"
inoo?kw kixax	"rattling stone bay"
xniizk	"facing the wind"
takata	"_____"
?eeme	"camp"
?ast ?ax	"stone point (of arrow)"
sosnitaa	"in front of Alcatraz Island"
xoxaoki	"the large ones"
kaii iti ktamkw	"men of the dry lake bed"
?ax ipak	"the other side of the water"